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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2107

August 18, 2005

The Hon. Michael Chertoff
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Recent news reports suggest that the Department of Homeland Security has under active consideration a proposal to ease the passenger screening requirements at our nation's airports. I am concerned that this proposal includes a recommendation that TSA employees should no longer be expected to search for or routinely confiscate razor blades, ice picks or knives less than 5 inches in length. This is a bad idea. This is the equivalent of handing back the box cutters to the 9/11 hijackers.

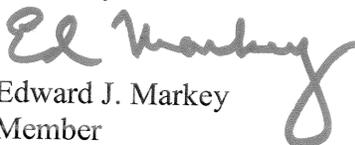
As one who attended several funerals of the thousands of families devastated by the horror of September 11th, 2001, I strongly disagree that now is the time to allow terrorists like Mohamed Atta and his sleeper cells to fly with knives, ice picks or razor blades.

It has been suggested that we no longer need to screen for these items because cockpit doors have been reinforced and some flights have air marshals. However, most passenger flights do not include air marshals. Moreover, if the trade-off is between the inconvenience of being screened for these potential weapons versus the inconvenience of trying to disarm suicidal terrorists in the aisles of a 747 in flight, I am certain that the public would prefer screening.

The Association of Flight Attendants shares this concern. In a recent letter to you, they wrote to you concerning knives, ice picks and razor blades, as follows: "They may not assist in breaking through a flight deck door, but they could definitely lead to the deaths of flight attendants and passengers... Even a plane that is attacked and results in only a few deaths would seriously jeopardize the progress we have all made in restoring confidence of the flying public... We urge you to reconsider allowing such dangerous items -- which have no place in the cabin of an aircraft in the first place -- to be introduced into our workplace."

The public is already very vulnerable due to your Department's continuing refusal to require the inspection of the cargo routinely loaded onto passenger planes. Let's not increase that vulnerability by allowing weapons into the passenger cabin.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
Member

Committee on Homeland Security